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SUBJECT: NIGERIA: FAILED PDP PRIMARY INDICATES MORE THAN  
PARTY STRIFE FOR NIGERIAN ELECTORAL PROCESS

CLASSIFIED BY AMBASSADOR HOWARD F. JETER. REASON 1.5 (B) AND  
(D).

11. (C) Summary: Many states delayed PDP primaries slated for early July for fear of violence. Violent disturbances marred the primaries that did go forward; Post sources could verify peaceful primaries in only four states. Vice President Atiku Abubakar indicated that agreements aimed at limiting violence within and between parties are being struck. Even days after the primaries, it is difficult to give a detailed account of what transpired as the situation in many areas remains uncertain. However, this message attempts to give a representative sampling of what we have learned thus far. Clearly the PDP is a fragmented machine and its inability to conduct credible party primaries indicates continued trouble for the electoral process.

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PDP Primary  
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12. (U) PDP primaries held in early July turned violent in much of the country. Rioting, property damage, bodily injury and deaths were reported in several states. A number of states postponed the primaries in all or large portions of their territory in anticipation of trouble. Other states called off primaries when clashes between party factions erupted in violence too difficult to control. Primaries were successfully completed without violence in Zamfara, Sokoto, Borno and Jigawa State. Primaries were not held in Katsina State, Sokoto State, Abia State or Plateau State. In Plateau State, a scene of earlier PDP factional violence, the primary was postponed following an ethnic clash that occurred on the previous weekend; ultimately, Plateau chose its candidates by consensus, except for three of the most volatile LGAs in Jos itself.

13. (U) In Taraba State, two persons were reported killed and 10 injured in election related violence. In the comparatively calm Federal Capital Territory (FCT), only three of six councils were able to complete the exercise. In Kaduna State, rival candidates are rumored to be solving their differences prior to the primary by agreeing on a consensus candidate. The state party had hoped to head off potential violence in this manner. However, Kaduna State later moved ahead with its primaries, which became marred by violence with 15 persons reportedly killed. An Embassy FSN witnessed several persons in Kwara State being taken into police custody, with what appeared to be knife and other injuries in primary-related violence.

14. (U) In Delta State, widespread violence on June 30 caused the postponement of the July 1 caucus. Two people reportedly died while seven persons sustained serious injuries. Police have arrested at least 40 rioters for electoral violence and illegal possession of arms. In Rivers State, the primary was halted and rescheduled for July 9 in four councils due to violence. On July 9, violence marred the rescheduled primary, and many persons reportedly fled to Port Harcourt or remained in their homes. According to reports, over 100 were left homeless after their homes were destroyed by rioters. In Bayelsa State 4-8 people lost their lives killed during the primary violence and at least 15 people were seriously injured. Twelve houses were set ablaze. Imo State PDP conducted its primaries July 5. Approximately 20 were injured and several incidents of vandalism and arson were reported.

15. (U) The party in Edo State completed the primary with credible results; however, some local chapters of the PDP lodged complaints at the party secretariat alleging gross irregularities in the primary process. There were reports that thousands of protestors disrupted the primaries in

several wards. In Ogun State, aggrieved members of the party have also lodged several complaints at the party secretariat. The Oyo state PDP congress was moved to Abuja after a failed attempt to hold it in Ibadan. Many aspirants have complained of manipulation and unfair use of executive power in Adamawa State. Aspirants and their supporters have protested the use of minors and bribery to manipulate primary results. The State PDP Chairman stunned journalists when asked to comment on the alleged "rigging or irregularities". Chief Joel Madaki stated, "Rigging is a nice word. I like it. It is acceptable in politics." In Kano State many candidates reported irregularities and have threatened to leave the PDP.

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Failed and Postponed Primaries not Surprising  
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16. (S) In late June, PDP Chairman Audu Ogbeh told the DCM that he feared for Nigeria because the country's productive economy was in ruins and the only thing left for people to "do" was politics. Given the PDP's track record, Ogbeh doubted the PDP primaries would be free of violence in very many places. He stated that Governors were trying to force through lists that favored them, even though primaries had not been held. (Note: The governors are not the only ones, lists coming from Aso Rock also add to the tension. End Note.) Ogbeh said he told several governors that he would simply substitute in other names if he thought they were playing tricks; as Party Chairman he had the authority to certify the party's candidates. (Note: This so-called fix has its flaws. Not only is it arbitrary, previous past PDP chairmen reportedly made money from the practice of changing lists).

17. (C) A PDP member of the National Assembly told Poloffs that the primary in Anambra State was marred by cheating. The Representative stated that he witnessed "open ballot" voting for local government candidates in one ward that produced an undisputed winner, only to find that the defeated contestant had emerged victorious when the results were compiled at the state level. He claimed similar chicanery was practiced throughout the state. Dr. C.P. Eziefie, former Anambra State governor and currently a Special Advisor to the President, told Polcouns that candidates in the PDP primaries in Abuja had bussed people from outside the capital to skew the election results. In Bayelsa State, he claimed the governor had issued an ultimatum to all LGA contestants: He had already selected who would win the nomination, thus there was no need to run against his handpicked choices. To soften the blow, the governor offered to compensate the losers for their campaign expenses if they agreed to drop out of the race before the primary. Those with the temerity to continue against the governor's wishes, would have to swallow their loss and well as their own expenses. Eziefie contended that the party's national executive committee, itself a victim of internecine fighting, was too divided and overwhelmed to prevent these transgressions from happening right under their noses in the nation's capital let alone in more distant places.

18. (C) Perhaps most disturbing of all, a group of Northern elder statesmen, whose political careers date back to the First Republic, recently told the Ambassador that political divisions in Nigeria are greater now than at any time in their collective memories. In 2003 they expected a conflagration.

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Comment  
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19. (C) Party primaries were fraught with intrigue, discrepancies and outright cheating. There are several reasons for this. As Minister of Defense and PDP king maker Danjuma recently told the Ambassador, the PDP is perceived to be so dominant in many states that winning the primary is tantamount to capturing the general election. Thus, the competition in the primaries in these areas has been as keen as what would be expected in the final inter-party competition. Thus, as a general rule, there was probably more upheaval in those areas where the PDP believes it is the strongest party. Second, there is the tenuous nature of the PDP itself. Despite some efforts by PDP Chairman Ogbeh and others to instill discipline and propriety, the PDP has very

little cohesion. In fact, the PDP is not a political party in the traditional sense, but a loose confederation of very disparate groups. Too many of the PDP's members see the party as a platform to promote and maximize their personal interests not as a party to which they owe allegiance. Instead of following the party, they believe the party should follow them. This led to relatively unbridled competition in some areas where contestants tried to out-cheat the other. This lack of restraint inexorably invited violence. Third, there is common belief among those seeking national as well as gubernatorial seats that placing allies in local government is an essential building-block to their electoral victory. Therefore, contestants for larger offices used the local primaries as a type of proxy battle. Last and most fundamentally, a great number of politicians do not value the democratic process. The will of the voter comes in second to the wishes of the "big man." Sadly, the political system is weak and cannot correct itself easily; thus, misconduct cascades. The minute one person misbehaves, others respond in kind; honesty puts one at a severe competitive disadvantage since there is little chance misconduct will be punished.

10. (C) Comment continued. Flawed and unseemly, the PDP primaries highlight the major problems in Nigerian electoral politics. It is a zero-sum, winner-take-all gambit that no one wants to lose. As such, it is a harbinger, indeed a warning of the difficulties that lay ahead for the general elections. Hopefully, the impact of the PDP primaries will register on sober minds in all the parties, the electoral commission, and the security forces so that they will begin to take steps that curb violence. However, the reality is that as long as many political practitioners see politics as an "all-or- nothing" affair, unruly competition and some level of violence will occasion most electoral contests.

JETER